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**Thursday, June 21, 2007**

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# Murder-suicide follows diagnosis of cancer's return

Derek Wallbank and Christine Rook - Lansing State Journal

Created: 6/20/2007 9:12:07 PM  
Updated: 6/20/2007 11:23:35 PM

ESSEX TWP. - April Bengel, 24, was killed by multiple shotgun blasts to her torso, the Clinton County medical examiner said today.

The results of the preliminary autopsy were released this afternoon as police continued the investigation of an apparent murder-suicide in Essex Twp., just outside St. Johns.

Clinton County Sheriff's deputies found the body of April Bengel's mother, Glee Bengel, 62, in the backyard with a self-inflicted gunshot wound Tuesday night at her home in Essex Twp., just outside St. Johns. A shotgun was found lying nearby.

Inside, they found Glee Bengel's daughter, 24-year-old April Bengel, dead of a gunshot wound.

A note was left at the scene. Police would not release the note, but Clinton Sheriff Sgt. Robert Sipple said Glee Bengel wrote that she had cancer and it was coming back.

"The note said she was sick with cancer, didn't feel that she could go through it again, and she didn't think anyone would take care of her daughter," he said.

The mother died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, but the Clinton County medical examiner's office, which conducted the autopsy at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing and at an undisclosed location, did not elaborate.

The deaths of the women stunned officials at the school the younger woman attended.

"Our prayers obviously are with the family," said Lee Kleinjans, designated spokesman for the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency, through which April took classes. "It was definitely a shock."

April Bengel had Down syndrome and was in her last year of school before she aged out, Sipple added.

The bodies were found by a relative who had come by to check some animal traps. Police said the two women "likely died the day before."



Clinton County

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Published June 21, 2007



(Photo by GREG DeRUITER/Lansing State Journal)

In memory: Fresh flowers were placed at the newspaper box at 3765 N. Grove Road in rural St. Johns where a murder-suicide was discovered Tuesday. Dead are a mother, 62, and her daughter, 24.

#### Who can help

Here are places parents of adult children with special needs can go for help:

- Community Mental Health of Clinton-Eaton-Ingham Counties: 346-9604
- Capital Area Center for Independent Living: 241-0393 or (877) 834-9683

#### Related content from LSJ:

- [Parents often worry how kids with special needs will survive](#)
- [Schneider: Anxieties of a caregiver parent are ones I know well](#)
- [VIDEO: Police describe murder-suicide in Essex Twp.](#)

## Police say mother killed daughter, self

Woman had cancer, feared for future of child with special needs

Christine Rook and Derek Wallbank  
Lansing State Journal

ESSEX TWP. - A 62-year-old woman who thought her colon cancer had returned is suspected of shooting her special-needs daughter before turning the gun on herself.

Both women - Glee Bengel and her daughter, 24-year-old April, who had Down syndrome - are dead.

They lived together on farmland off of North Grove Road that had been in their family for more than 150 years, according to a plaque in front of the home posted by the Michigan Centennial Farm Association.

Preliminary autopsies indicate they likely died Monday, although their bodies weren't discovered until Tuesday when a distant cousin stopped by to check animal traps, police said Wednesday.

Deputies were called to respond to what they believed was a suicide, only to discover the daughter's body inside the house and a suicide note believed to have been written by Glee Bengel.

"The note," according to Clinton County sheriff's Det. Sgt. Robert Sipple, "said she was sick with cancer, didn't feel that she could go through it again, and she didn't think anyone would take care of her daughter."

Neighbors and a relative in this farm community declined to talk about Glee Bengel, but people who knew April were quick to say how the daughter will be missed.

"April was delightful," said Deb Nowland, supervisor of special education at the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency in St. Johns. April was enrolled there in a program to teach her living skills and prepare her for a job.

"She was funny and affectionate and an outstanding human being," Nowland said. "She brought everyone smiles."

### **Shotgun used**

The young woman, whom sheriff's officials described as having the mental capacity of a 6-year-old, was shot several times in the torso with a shotgun inside the house, police said. Sipple said the same gun appears to have been used to shoot Glee Bengel and was found outside behind the garage with her body.

Observations at the scene and information provided by preliminary autopsies have led investigators to believe the deaths to be a murder-suicide.

The Bengel homestead is located about 4 miles northwest of St. Johns on a dirt road flanked by freshly plowed fields and acres of tall grass. The vast lawn surrounding the house and barn at 3765 N. Grove Road looked freshly mowed. Someone had placed a fresh bouquet of handpicked roses in a metal post out in front of the house.

Amid this peaceful scene, there was no indication of the violence sheriff's officials said had occurred there just days before.

"It was definitely a shock," said Lee Kleinjans, the designated spokesman for the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency. "Everybody is really concerned about the situation."

April Bengel was only a year away from aging out of the educational program.

### **Learning job skills**

The young woman worked in a tiny on-site restaurant called the Second Cup Cafe, where she learned how to work the cash register and wait on customers. She and other special-needs students poured coffee and served sandwiches. They also made special holiday crafts, which are sold in the cafe.

One of April's last projects was to help build a display of fall knickknacks, which will go on sale when the cafe reopens after the start of school in September.

Nowland pointed to some of the objects she knew April had sanded and painted.

Tears welled in her eyes.

"She always had a hug," Nowland said, "and asked how you were doing."

Contact Christine Rook at 377-1261 or [clrook@lsj.com](mailto:clrook@lsj.com).

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- [Police say mother killed daughter, self](#)
- [Parents often worry how kids with special needs will survive](#)

## Schneider: Anxieties of a caregiver parent are ones I know well

ESSEX TWP. - Where there is life, there is hope. I believe that.

But I also believe hope is sometimes hard to see. It can sink out of sight, leaving a hole perfectly suited for despair.

The story of Glee Bengel and her 24-year-old daughter, April Bengel, although extraordinary, is not unprecedented.

I know this because I have, stuffed into a book somewhere, a handful of yellowing newspaper clippings about similar tragedies - murder-suicides involving parents and their children with disabilities.

The stories interest me because, as the father of a child with developmental disabilities, I could identify with the dynamics and the emotions - if not the hopelessness.

My daughter died of an accidental drowning in August 2002 when she was 25.

Before that, I knew all along that her three younger siblings would watch out for Jessica after my wife and I were gone (even as teenagers, they had begun to plan their lives accordingly).

Still, having brooded too many times over my daughter's long-range future, I think I had a pretty good idea of what went through the minds of the parents who took the lives of their own children before killing themselves.

### Desperate situations

Whenever I see stories about this particular brand of desperation, I save them, thinking that some day I'll write about the subject in depth.

- A 90-year-old widower - a man described by neighbors as a saintly father - smothers his bedridden son, then shoots himself.
- A mother with a terminal heart condition poisons herself and her severely disabled daughter. Police find the dead girl in the dead mother's embrace.
- An elderly couple, no longer possessing the physical strength to care for their quadriplegic, brain-

damaged son, decide to give the next life a try, taking their only son with them.

The common element: a reluctance on the part of the parents to leave their vulnerable children to an indifferent world.

A world, in any case, that could never provide the love and protection - the patience, understanding and self-sacrifice - the parents could.

Glee and April Bengel lived northwest of St. Johns. Glee had cancer; April had Down syndrome. On Tuesday night, Clinton County Sheriff's deputies found the mother and daughter dead, of gunshot wounds, at their home.

Glee's cancer, which apparently had been in remission, had returned.

### **Only way out?**

In describing the note that Glee left, Sheriff Sgt. Robert Sipple confirmed what I had suspected from the moment I heard about the murder-suicide.

Sipple was quoted as saying:

"The note said she was sick with cancer, didn't feel that she could go through it again, and she didn't think anyone would take care of her daughter."

Murder can never be justified. Suicide is a poor escape.

I don't know what other alternatives Glee Bengel had - for herself, or her daughter.

But the world, minus the sheltering arms of a loving parent, can be a harsh place for people who depend completely on the selflessness and forbearance of other human beings.

That's why we sometimes read about parents who just aren't willing to send their children to that place.

What do you think? Call John Schneider at 377-1175, send a fax to 377-1298 or e-mail [jschneid@lsj.com](mailto:jschneid@lsj.com). Include your name, phone number, city, town or township.

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Hart, Michigan

Thursday, June 21, 2007

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## Letters to Editor

Posted: 6-21-2007

### Letter — Anniversary marked

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**Anniversary marked**

Dear Editor:

Sunday (June 17) marked the 10-year anniversary of the disappearance of Andre' Bosse. As many of you remember, Andre' was 11 years old when she was abducted from the security of her home by the father of a friend. At the time of her disappearance Andre' & her family lived in the White Lake Area. She was never seen alive again. The pain of her disappearance is personal to me. I was on duty patrolling southern Oceana County for the Michigan State Police when the call came in. Andre' was sexually assaulted and murdered.

Andre's story and stories of other children like her whose lives have been cut short are heartbreaking. I want to take a minute to applaud our community. Ten years ago, hundreds, if not thousands, of people who didn't even know Andre' dropped what they were doing and drove to northern Muskegon County to help a family in need search for their missing daughter. Restaurants, churches and grocery stores donated food and supplies to help sustain the law enforcement agents and volunteers from all over the state. Everyone pitched in and did what they could in hopes of finding Andre'. Though the outcome for Andre' and her family was not as we hoped, the community continues to honor and remember this 11-year-old child through her legacy, the Andre' Bosse Centers.



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When Andre's parents and I first started to dream of an off-site child abuse prevention center and forensic interview room for children, little did we know that our dream would turn into a fully accredited Child Advocacy Centers that now serves Oceana, Newaygo, Mason and Lake counties. We had the vision, but the thanks once again goes to the community. Your financial support and volunteer hours have allowed us to provide direct services for over 750 children and their families and our prevention programs have reached over 10,000 children in your area schools.

It is encouraging to be part of such a caring community. On behalf of Andre's family, the Board of Directors and the staff at the Andre' Bosse Centers, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for supporting the Andre' Bosse Centers and helping to keep Andre's memory alive. Long live our children.

**BILL BURD**

Retired Michigan State Police

President, Board of Directors of the Andre' Bosse Centers

302 Hansen St., Hart

## Voice Your Opinion

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06/20/2007

## Sugar Festival's Child Safety Day is slated for Friday

The Huron Daily Tribune

**SEBEWAING** —The Child Safety Day during the Michigan Sugar Festival will take place from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. Friday. It will be located at the main park on Fredrick Street between Fourth and Henry. In the event of rain, activities will be moved to the Sebewaing Township Fire Hall located on the corner of North Center and Sharpsteen streets.

The Sebewaing Police Department will be doing fingerprinting and identification along with coloring books and police car tours. The police department, along with donations from the Sebewaing Light and Water Department, will be giving away one boys and one girls bicycle during the event.

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The Sebewaing Township Fire Department will have a fire truck on display. The Sebewaing Township Ambulance also will have an ambulance on display. They both also will be handing out safety materials.

The Huron County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police will administer free car safety seat checks with a police car on display.

The Huron County Prosecuting Attorney's Office will have the Huron County Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) Council plan to promote child welfare and safety at home and at school.

The Field Neuroscience Institute, in conjunction with St. Mary's of Saginaw, will put on their "Buckle Your Brain" program. They will be giving away 200 free helmets which will be fitted by FNI Prevention Technicians. These helmets are certified for use on bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards. Helmets will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Helmet sizes will range from toddler to adult 5.

All participants, including children, must be present to receive a free helmet. D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) of America will have a booth to promote child safety.

The D.A.R.E. program is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teach children from grades K-12 how to resist peer pressure and live productive and violence free lives.

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## Parental rights challenged after Detroit boy's death

Midday update

Associated Press

VAN BUREN TOWNSHIP, - A 3-year-old boy who died from a head injury suffered repeated abuse at a state-licensed foster home, according to court documents.

James Earl Bradley Jr., of Detroit, died six months after being placed in a Wayne County foster home.

Children who were in the day care center operated by Christine Woodward out of her foster home told state social workers that James - her foster son - would get into trouble for wetting his pants, according to a Department of Human Services petition filed Tuesday in Wayne County juvenile court.

One child told a department worker that Woodward would whip James with a long black belt and sometimes with her hand, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Though no one has been charged in his death, state officials are petitioning to terminate Woodward and husband Lasana Karva's parental rights to their two children, ages 15 and 11, who were removed from the Van Buren Township home on Monday.

Both adults were questioned after Woodward reported that she and her daughter found James crying in the master bedroom on April 8, officials said. In court documents, Karva said his wife never used physical punishment.

Ronald Gold, an attorney for the couple, said they were "very upset" by the filing's allegations.

"That court is so dysfunctional," Gold told The Detroit News. "It's programmed and set up to remove children."

James was on life support for five days until he died at Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

Woodward was licensed to have as many as four children in day care and two foster children at a time, state records say. The state has suspended Woodward's day-care license and the couple's foster-care provider license, the DHS said.

Woodward - who had a day care license with the department for about 10 years - and Karva became licensed foster parents last year through the Ennis Center for Children.



## Teacher accused of sex with student

**FLINT**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Thursday, June 21, 2007

**By Melissa Burden and Beata Mostafavi**

**Journal Staff Writers**

FLINT - A Northern Academy teacher has been accused of having sex with a student, the district's interim superintendent confirmed Wednesday.

Linda Thompson said Wednesday that the alleged incident happened a few months ago, but she declined to comment further.

The teacher is on administrative leave, Principal Fred White said Wednesday.

White, who oversees students in 10th through 12th grades, also declined to comment further, as did Flint police.

Jeff Clothier, who represents the 16-year-old victim, said he believes it all started with an "inappropriate relationship" between the young man and the female teacher.

"That led to text messages from the teacher after school hours and eventually led to sexual intercourse at her home," he said.

Clothier said his client said the same day he was arrested for armed robbery, he had smoked marijuana, consumed alcohol and had sex with the teacher.

"He had never gotten into trouble before," Clothier said.

"Pretty much our position is when the school found out about it, they did the responsible thing and put the teacher on administrative leave. My clients did the right thing by not taking it into their own hands.

"It's been three months, and we're just waiting for the police department to do their job."

"I just want to see justice be served," he added. "I think if it were a girl who was assaulted by a male teacher, there would a public outcry about this being a horrible thing. ... But because it's a woman teacher and male child, it doesn't seem like anyone even cares."

Northern's White referred other questions to district spokesman Craig Carter, who was not at Wednesday's board meeting and could not immediately be reached for comment.

Northern Academy, 3284 Mackin Road, houses seventh through 12th grades.

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## Man charged with sex crime

Thursday, June 21, 2007

By Danielle Quisenberry

dquisenberry@citpat.com -- 768-4929

A 42-year-old man was arrested this week on charges of illegal sexual contact with a young girl.

Blackman Township Department of Public Safety officers arrested Timothy Hines late Sunday afternoon. He was arraigned Tuesday on one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Chief Assistant Prosecutor Mark Blumer said Hines' most recent residence is believed to be Blackman Township.

Hines' victim was a girl younger than 13, Blumer said, declining to be more specific. He also declined to release details about the alleged incident that led to the arrest.

More details cannot be released because an investigation of Hines is ongoing, he said. To tell what happened to justify Hines' charge could interfere with detectives' work, Blumer said.

Michael Jester, director of the Blackman Department of Public Safety, also declined to comment on specifics of the case.

The prosecutor's office had a press conference scheduled for today.

The prosecutor is asking any parent whose child has come in contact with Hines to call the Blackman Public Safety Department, Blumer said.

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## House bills would encourage foster care placement with relatives

LANSING, Mich. -- Bills aimed at making it easier for relatives of a child to serve as foster parents passed the state House on Wednesday.

Michigan's foster care system already relies heavily on relatives of children who have been removed from their parents' homes. But House Democrats who sponsored the bills said the practice could be encouraged further.

A bill to require parents of a child entering foster care to provide a list of relatives for potential placement passed by a 103-2 vote.

The House also overwhelmingly supported a bill prompting agencies to consider a child's religious background before placement in the home, with the goal that foster families have the same background as the child when possible and appropriate.

The bills now go to the Senate.

Last week, the House passed a bill that would provide a preference for children entering the foster care system to be placed with relatives when possible. The legislation would put into law a practice already widely used by the state Department of Human Services.

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The foster care bills are House Bills 4735-4737.

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On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/>

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## Living within our means possible on any budget

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

Two Saginaw public officials fed themselves on \$5 a day a couple of weeks ago to dramatize how the average food stamp recipient survives.

State Rep. Andy Coulouris, a Saginaw Democrat, and Randy R. Barst, Saginaw County Department of Human Services director, found the challenge difficult.

If they had taken the challenge for a month instead of a week, they'd have found it easier.

Here's why. Spending \$5 per day for 30 days would give each of them \$150. Assuming they got the entire \$150 up front -- perhaps not realistic, but here's why it should be -- they could have spent a fair chunk of that money on food staples.

For example, they could have bought several boxes of cereal, a jar or two of peanut butter and jelly, bread, perhaps crackers, chips or on-sale dessert items, a bag of apples and/or mini-carrots and a bunch of bananas, a can of coffee if that's in their diets, and some ground beef, chicken, spaghetti noodles and sauce, and other dinner items. Obviously, all this costs more than \$5, so surviving day-to-day on food stamps this way won't work, but with a longer-term picture, it is possible.

How possible?

My family of five, which includes three teenage boys, eats well on less than \$5 per person per day. My wife keeps a budget and wrote out the figures for me. Our food expenses, including eating out several times a month, averaged \$693.40 between January and May. At \$5 per person for five of us for

30 days, we would spend \$750 per month.

We eat lots of cereal -- and rarely spend more than \$3 per box by buying generic. It tastes good. I brown-bag lunch every day and have done so since I graduated from college. We drink lots of milk -- probably our largest staple, and we try hard not to spend \$3 per gallon -- and we eat out a couple of times a month. We also buy a fair amount of fresh fruit and vegetables.

My salary at The Saginaw News, of course, is far greater than poverty wages or a food-stamp allowance. I'm not raking in the big bucks, but we're doing well as a family.

We live within our means.

This is crucial. Whether living on food stamps or a six-figure income, many Americans live beyond their means. The U.S. Federal Reserve estimated the average American household had credit card debt of \$5,100 in 2004. Slightly more than half of credit card holders do not pay off their balances each month, which means that average debt is skewed. It's much higher than \$5,100 for those who carry balances.

If we can't pay our debts, we are living beyond our means. Our society says we can have it all now, but we can't. Eventually, we must pay.

If our state legislators understood this, they wouldn't have to cut \$800,000 from the budget this fiscal year. Our federal legislators don't have to live within their means, and they don't come close.

Someday -- perhaps in the not-too-distant future -- our economy will collapse under the weight of personal and public debt. America's greatest threat is not Middle East politics or terrorism, but our own out-of-control lifestyles.

My wife and I live debt-free. We own our house free and clear. We can afford a bigger house with a mortgage, but we're content where we are. We could eat out more, but that's less healthy and more costly than what we do now. I put a dollar or two (or three) in the coffee cup at work each week; this is far cheaper

than stopping for a cup on the way to the office every day.

As individuals and families, there are many ways we can cut costs. I have to believe governments of all sizes can do this as well.

We don't have to keep up with the Joneses. We don't need a new computer every year and a half, which is their average life span. We don't have to beam in 150 channels or keep a TV in every bedroom.

Live thankfully. Live in peace with yourself. Live within your means.

Then we'd all have enough to afford the meaningful things in life.v

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## Alcona central dispatch facing shortfall

By PATTY RAMUS

With the Alcona County Central Dispatch facing an approximate \$98,000 shortfall in its budget, the 911 authority board is requesting an increase in its surcharge to \$4.

Director Dean Parker brought the request before the board of commissioners Wednesday morning. According to Parker, the projected revenues for 2007 is \$338,000 while projected expenses are \$464,000. The authority board experienced a shortfall during its 2006 budget, which it had to cover with money from the contingency fund.

The increase is estimated to generate an additional \$112,000.

"That would cover our shortfall and that would allow us to rebuild our contingency fund," Parker said.

This is the first time 911 has requested an increase since the surcharge was approved by voters in 2000 and renewed in 2004. Currently the surcharge is \$2.78.

"(In previous years) for a number of reasons we did not increase the surcharge," Parker said.

The authority board can't continue to cover budget shortfalls from the contingency fund, said Chair Doug Ellinger.

"If we don't do this (increase) we're going to be coming back to the county saying we don't have enough money to operate," he said. "The long and short of it is there's not enough money to pay expenses."

Vice Chair Carolyn Brummund requested the authority board provide an amended budget before the board of commissioners makes a decision at its next meeting.

"I'd like to see where this is going to be spent. How is it going to be utilized," she said.

In other business:

The board of commissioners will have one regular meeting in July. The next meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. July 11.



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## Journal

## Front Page



Karin Hobbs, Alcona County Department of Human Services director, said due to state budget cuts, DHS has lost funding for contracts under the Strong Families Safe Children model. These contracts include after-school enrichment, Day One program and school liaison officer.

The board approved various budget adjustments.

Judge Allen Yenior said Bob Schemanske, magistrate/probation officer, is exploring his options for retirement. When Schemanske retires, the responsibilities of 81st District Court staff likely would be rearranged and an entry level clerk would be hired. This has the potential to save the court about \$10,000, Yenior said.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Low-income kids get school health screens

Thursday, June 21, 2007

By Julie Mack

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Students in Kalamazoo County Head Start who don't get health screenings in the preschool program don't fall through the cracks for long -- thanks to a state law that mandates screenings for children to enter kindergarten.

It was revealed this week that Kalamazoo County failed to provide one or more federally required health screenings for 62 percent of the 602 children in its Head Start school-readiness program, which serves low-income families, according to an audit done in February and March.

That failure, characterized by Deputy County Administrator Peter Battani as a ``major problem," potentially affects the health monitoring of many of the county's poor, young children. Federal authorities have given the county until July 9 to take corrective action.

The school enrollment process for kindergartners or transfer students requires documentation of immunizations and of vision and hearing screens. Parents can get the health screenings through their family physician or county health department.

The law also requires vision checks to be conducted every two years while children are in school.

Linda Vail Buzas, director of the Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department, said Kalamazoo Public Schools also has various programs, such a school nurse, a health clinic at Edison Environmental Science Academy, and use of interns nurses from Western Michigan University to keep tabs on students' health.

``It's not a total fall-through-the-cracks thing," Buzas said of shortcomings in Head Start screenings, which includes vision, hearing and dental checks for students as well as physicals.

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## Immigrant bill stirs uproar

**FLINT**

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**By Joe Lawlor**

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When he was 17 years old in 1988, Jaime Guzman entered the U.S. from Mexico by swimming across the Rio Grande River.

Although the Guadalajara native came here illegally, he worked for three years picking apples and cucumbers in Michigan to obtain legal status as a permanent U.S. resident.

Congress is considering sweeping changes to the nation's immigration laws that would make it easier for illegal immigrants like Guzman to legally work in the country and to eventually become citizens. The bill, which also would bolster border protection and more strictly enforce immigration laws, stalled a few weeks ago but is expected to be considered next week in the Senate.

Guzman, 36, of Flint said he had to scrape by, earning \$10 for picking a giant box of apples. He said it would take him 12 hours to pick two boxes of apples.

"I just decided to come up here and work to get the American dream," said Guzman, who left the fields as soon as he could and now earns about \$50,000 a year in the construction business. He said he moved from Texas to Michigan because he had relatives here.

Due to backlogs, it's become even more difficult to become a legal U.S. resident today than it did in the 1980s, experts say.

Guzman said he doesn't like how some are demonizing Hispanics for immigrating here.

"What is there to be afraid of?" asked Guzman, who hopes to someday earn a degree in civil engineering. He attended Mott Community College in the 1990s but said he couldn't afford to continue his education.

Some say the bill is a bad idea, and it has drawn the ire of conservative activists.

Phil Kent, a spokesman for Americans for Immigration Control, said the practical effect of legalizing 12 million illegal immigrants would be to swamp the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which already has years of case backlogs.

"The system would break down within 24 hours," Kent said.

But Kent said it's also a moral issue.

"We have the most generous legal immigration system in the world," Kent said. "(The bill) is a slap in the face to people who came here legally. It is the undermining of the rule of law. They snuck in, and they get to stay."

### QUICK TAKE

#### Immigration

What's happening: Congress, with support from President Bush, is considering immigration reform that would grant legal status to millions of illegal immigrants and make it easier for them to obtain citizenship. The legislation also would fund border enforcement and more crackdowns on illegal immigrants.

What's next: The bill died in the Senate two weeks ago but will be reconsidered, possibly as soon as next week. It could be changed drastically because there's expected to be a flurry of amendment proposals.

Flint resident Shannon Thomas said she doesn't like the idea of absolving people who broke the law.

"I just think we're overpopulated and overextended financially," she said.

Alex Isaac, executive director of the American-Arab Heritage Council in Flint, said he has mixed feelings about immigration but doesn't believe legalizing millions is a good idea.

"Our community is split on this," Isaac said. "A large majority of the people immigrated here through the right channels."

But Isaac also said he wishes immigration laws would be more family-friendly. If someone immigrates legally, he should be able to easily bring his parents and siblings into the country, he said. The way it is now, he said, too many families are being split up.

Raul Garcia, chair of the Genesee County Hispanic Caucus, said he believes the bill will improve the lives of many people.

"Most people who come from Mexico are here simply to better themselves," said Garcia, whose parents immigrated from Mexico.

Jim Shaw of Grand Blanc Township said not legalizing the immigrants already here maintains the status quo in which they work for little pay and often are paid less than the minimum wage under the table.

Shaw said the U.S. should sign trade agreements with Mexico that bolster worker protections there, making it less attractive for them to immigrate illegally.

"It bothers me that we're blaming folks who are victims of our government's policies," Shaw said.

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